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Comparative Religion Notes.

NOTES ON CURRENT ANTHROPOLOGICAL LITERATURE.

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It is purposed in these notes to call attention from time to time to the most important current literature upon anthropological subjects, especially that which bears upon the study of religion. Much of this literature is published where it is not accessible to the general reader, and it will be the especial aim of these summaries to render that material available. The following series includes articles and books appearing within the last six months, July to December, 1894.

J. Walter Fewkes (*Journal of American Ethnology and Archaeology*, Vol. IV.) presents an important contribution to our knowledge of the famous Snake Dance of the Mokis. The title is "Snake Ceremonials at Wálpi." The ceremony is performed at the Indian towns of Wálpi, Micoñ-in-o-vi, Cúño-pa-vi and Oraibe once in two years. As they do not all observe the same year a "snake dance" takes place annually at one or other of these towns. At each village the "flute ceremony" is celebrated in the year when the snake dance is not. The Snake Ceremony, is probably but a subordinate part of a grand rain ceremonial which is under the direction of the Snake-Antelope Societies—secret religious organizations. Our author undoubtedly gives the most complete account of the whole ceremony ever printed. Like so many Indian ceremonies in that region this lasts nine days, the action for each day varying. Thus on the first day the sacred liquid and the symbolic mosaic of sand are made: the second day sacred prayer sticks are made and consecrated by the singing of sixteen traditional songs; these or similar songs are sung each remaining day of the celebration; on the third day the prayer-sticks are distributed to the gods and the first hunt for snakes is undertaken, this time toward the north; upon the three following days snakes are hunted, the region searched being in the west, south and east in order, one region for each day; on the seventh day a fresh sand painting is constructed, charm liquid and pellets are prepared and initiation into the sacred societies is held; on the eighth day the antelope race, a dramatization of the cosmogonic legend and a public ceremonial upon the plaza when the priesthood use cornstalks and gourds, are the three great features; on the ninth, last day, a dramatization, a ceremonial of the novices, a snake race, a snake washing, and, the snake dance itself,

followed by drinking an emetic and a feast, fill up the day. The next day the priests are purified. Fewkes does not attempt to explain the ceremonial; he simply puts before the student material for study and comparison. Nowhere else is there so painstaking an account of this weird rite. Those who wish to learn how definite and precise barbarous ceremonials are, how full of mystery and symbolism, how complex an outfit of utensils and sacred objects is necessary in them, how importantly and suggestively dramatization of old legends enters into them, will find Dr. Fewkes' essay worthy of careful reading.—— Frederick Starr (*Outlook*, November 3) describes the "Rain Dance at Cochiti." The ceremonial takes place annually upon the Saint's Day—July 14. The article is popular in style but gives in some detail the features of the day's performance which is a strange combination of pagan and Christian observances.—— In the same region with these curious Indian worshipers is a stronghold of the "Holy Brotherhood" of Passionists. This consists of white men, Mexicans and probably some Indians, who celebrate each year the passion of Christ. A. M. Darley ("Penitentes of the Southwest") presents documents never before publicly printed perhaps. The brotherhood is far stronger in New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado and Northern Mexico than is generally realized. This little book is particularly timely as the past year saw an unusual amount of unusually vigorous celebration. Lummis' description ("Land of Poco Tiempo") of the procession, flagellation and crucifixion at San Mateo in 1891 aroused much interest; this book containing the constitution and by-laws of the order, some of the sacred songs, formulæ, etc. and illustrated with most curious pictures drawn by a Mexican, should increase this interest. The flagellation, the processions, the tortures with cactuses and by dragging almost naked men with ropes over rocky places, and the punishment of renegades—all these and more are described in a straight-forward fashion.

In "The Book of the Dead and Rain Ceremonials" (*American Anthropologist*, July) Ellen Russell Emerson directs attention to many interesting similarities between the ideas and rituals of the old Egyptians and the modern North American Indians. The feather is symbolic of the life-giving power of light with both; the post, surmounted by the head of Anubis, guide in the way, is like the degree post in the initiation ceremonial of the Ojibwa Midewiwin; guard serpents occur in both; fir trees are near to these in Egypt and cedars in America. The serpent, associated with water in Egypt recurs almost everywhere in the Rain Ceremonies of America; the crook in Egypt is associated with the serpent of wind and water and among the Tusayan crooked staffs are used to represent the dead. In the Egyptian pictures live snakes are carried in the ceremonial; so they are in Tusayan. The medicine lodge and the kibva with its *sipapu* may be compared with the Egyptian sacred house. There is in both regions a relation between the dead and rain; in both, water is associated with the beginning of life. After making the comparison from which these resemblances proceed the author recognizes that they need not necessarily point to a community of origin for the two religions. "Man, what-

ever country he occupied, might resort to dramatization, mimicking those forces elemental or animal, which he believes create or contribute to life, this being done by means of symbols and adroit personifications, the universality of these customs becoming the fruitful source of parallel notions." That the Egyptian ceremonials considered, existing among a civilized people, point back to the time when they must have developed among a population in a culture stage akin to or lower than the Indians mentioned, is claimed, and we think justly. The Indians most commonly mentioned in the comparisons are the Ojibwa and the Tusayan Pueblos but the Mexican, Peruvian and Dakotan are called in as occasion requires. Any point established by too general selection of this kind is not strongly established. To compare a single tribe of Americans with the old Egyptians as presented in the "Book of the Dead," would have been sufficiently striking and more logical.

The Museo Arqueologico Nacional at Madrid owns two precious manuscripts of the old Mayas. One of these known as the "Codex Cortesianus" has been recently reproduced in facsimile, both as to form, designs and colors, in commemoration of the Quadri-centennial Exposition held in Spain's capital in 1892. The reproduction of this manuscript has placed hitherto inaccessible material in the hands of American students with the result of a considerable number of papers concerning it. Among these is J. Walter Fewkes' "A Study of Certain Figures in a Maya Codex" (*American Anthropologist*, July). Dr. Fewkes finds in this codex thirty-eight representations of a figure which he calls, with Schellhas, the long-nosed god. By an analysis of these representations and their surroundings he concludes that the figures represent a divinity, masked in a head-dress symbolizing the serpent, representing probably a god of water or rain. An interesting parallel is traced by the author between the symbolism here and that which he found in Tusayan.—— From the same codex, Saville (*American Anthropologist*, October) draws evidence of the recognition of the sacred year of 260 days.—— D. G. Brinton briefly discusses in the *Archaeologist* (November), "What the Maya Inscriptions Tell About." He shows the codices to be chiefly concerned with time—the sacred year and its relation to other periods—and ceremonials. They reveal a curious mathematics and astronomy pursued, not for themselves, but for the service of religion.

Washington Matthews, "Songs of Sequence of the Navajos" (*Journal of American Folklore*, July–September), considers the songs sung by Shamans in their great religious celebrations. He emphasizes the importance to the Indian mind of accuracy in every word and shows the prodigious exercise of memory apparently demanded; this is still further increased by the fact that frequently the words sung are almost meaningless. He shows that there exists a mnemonic aid in the form of a myth key.—Stephen D. Peet (*American Antiquarian*, July) discusses "Sabaeism, or Sky Worship in America." He discusses, among others, the following topics: Sabaeism was prehistoric, not the first religion, the religion of agricultural peoples; the sky, variously

conceived, was filled with divinities, who held the powers of nature as subject to them; peculiar symbolic ceremonies precede the naming of a person; mysterious and secret societies are means to secure heavenly gifts; divination and magic, and special notions concerning the dead. The author says: "orientation was the all important factor in the symbolism of sky worship." The discussions go outside the American field. The points are not clearly made. —In "Transformation Myths" (*American Antiquarian*, September) the same author applies the idea of transformation, the change of gods into men, nature powers, and objects of all kinds — to the explanation of various carved and painted figures made by our aborigines.

The Memoirs of the International Congress of Anthropology held at the World's Columbian Exposition has recently appeared and for the convenience of students a list of the more important papers relative to religious subjects found therein is here presented: "Orientation," A. L. Lewis; "Secret Societies and Sacred Mysteries," Stephen D. Peet; "Ritual regarded as the Dramatization of Myth", W. W. Newell; "Some Illustrations of the Connection between Myth and Ceremonial," W. Matthews; "The Scope and Method of the Historical Study of Religions," Morris Jastrow, Jr.; "An Ancient Egyptian Rite Illustrating a Phase of Primitive Thought," Sara G. Stevenson; "A Chapter of Zuñi Mythology," Matilda C. Stevenson; "Museum Collections to Illustrate Religious History and Ceremonials," Cyrus Adler. Some of these are of great importance. Jastrow and Adler both strike the matter of museums of religious objects. The former believes that a museum of religious history should comprise three sections, the general, the special, and the comparative. In the first he would present diagrams illustrating the divisions of the subject, the sequence, geographical distribution and main elements of religions, and the characteristic traits of the races of mankind; in the second section there should be a representation by objects and otherwise of the religious life of primitive man and of the religions of civilization; in the last, duplicates of objects shown in the second but arranged to bring out points by comparison, and charts. Adler in this same direction urges scientific method in such museums and presents an historic sketch of the public museums and collections of religious objects and of the exhibition of such as Expositions of an international kind. In two appendices examples of classification of religious objects are given.

In *Melusine* (July-August) Henri Gaidoz presents one of his remarkable studies in folk-belief. The article is entitled "Saint Eloi" and its key-note is struck in the following passage:

"Rien ne se perd dans l'histoire; et quand une religion en remplace une autre, la nouvelle absorbe et s'approprie l'ancienne; les anciennes croyances et les anciennes pratiques se continuent avec une étiquette nouvelle, et cette étiquette est pour elles un renouvellement de force et de durée; elles sont nées pour ainsi une seconde fois."

The saint is historically a goldsmith, who became a confidential minister to Dagobert. The historic character becomes confounded with an ancient

cult hero and assumes his characters. Then, as patron of all smiths his statue is revered by the mediaeval societies or guilds of metal workers; becoming pre-eminently the patron saint of blacksmiths and himself a blacksmith working miracles, pilgrimages are made to his shrine and processions of sick horses journey to his chapels. In this phase carried into Italy the sainted blacksmith assumes new characters, stealing them of course from some forgotten patron saint, and figures in encounters with the devil masquerading as a woman. The article is well worth reading.

In *Am Urquell* papers of interest and often of importance relative to the Jews are constantly appearing. In the numbers since July are several of this kind. The titles show their character and range; "Zur Volkskunde der Juden Böhmens," *Ethnographie der ostgalischen Juden*," "Volkskunde palästinischer Juden," "Reime galizischen Judenkinden."

The *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* (Aug.-Nov.) devotes seventy pages of close print to a translation of the second part of Mikhailovski's *Shamanstvo*, under the title of "Shamanism in Siberia and European Russia." It aims to give a simple "characterization of Shamanism in Russia in order to compare it with similar institutions in other lands." The study is masterly. The distribution of Shamanism in Siberia is traced from tribe to tribe. Although so far as our information goes it varies from place to place, the fundamental principles remain the same. Everywhere the Shaman is a marvel. He is seen to summon spirits, to assume and to transfer disease, to unbind himself when tied with ropes; he falls into trances, visits the lower world in search of souls of the sick, ascends into the highest heaven, is clairvoyant and prophetic. So much crops out in the attempt to trace his distribution. The author now proceeds to study particular points of interest. The paraphernalia of the Shaman deserves attention. His tambourine is at once a summoner of spirits and a steed upon which the Shaman mounts to heaven; covered with strange pictures it possesses in itself great spirit power. The Shaman's dress, composed usually of at least four elements,—an outer garment with the strangest objects hung upon it, mask for the face, breast plate of metal, hat—is peculiar and assists in spirit dealings. It really serves a three-fold purpose—impressing spectators and marking off the officiating Shaman from other men, agitating bystanders as it is shaken in the dance and frenzy by its wearer, bringing by its mysterious symbolism the Shaman into direct communication with the spirits. The mode of becoming a Shaman is carefully described—the signs by which his calling is made sure, the preliminary steps, the course of instruction under direction of an older Shaman, the final ceremonial initiation. The functions and the doings of the Shaman as mediator, healer, priest, and wizard are traced. The position of the Shaman among men, the question of their belief in him and of his belief in himself are discussed. His burial and the worship of him after death by others is narrated. So much in Siberia. Nowhere in European Russia does Shamanism fully flourish now, but there are traces and survivals, at times very plain and

striking, here and there. These are fully described among the Samoyeds, Lapps (Norway and Sweden), Votyaks, Cheremises and Chuvashes, Mordvins, Kirghizes. In closing the author says: "Throughout the vast extent of the Russian Empire, from Behring's Strait to the borders of the Scandinavian Peninsula, among the multitudinous tribes preserving remains of their former heathen beliefs, we find in greater or less degree Shamanistic phenomena. Despite the variety of races and the enormous distances that separate them, the phenomena which we class under the general name of Shamanism are found repeated with marvelous regularity. In order to throw light on this regularity in a scientific manner, and explain more clearly the performances of the Shamans of Siberia and European Russia, we must glance at the analogous institutions existing on that continent which is separated from Asia by Behrings Strait." It is to be hoped that the *Journal* may translate this author's further work; the Shamanism of the Tlingits and their neighbors is very interesting.